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THE NEW YORK TIMES

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U.S. Acting More Urgently To End Rwanda Slaughter

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, June 16 — Reacting to criticism that Washington has responded too slowly to the killing in Rwanda, the Administration has speeded up plans to equip United Nations peacekeepers there with armored personnel carriers, officials said today.

The Administration has also decided to describe the deaths there as genocide, after once instructing its spokesmen to say only that "acts of genocide may have occurred."

The Administration's resolve is being driven by the White House, which has faced criticism that its efforts to stop the massacres in Rwanda were inadequate and ensnared in red tape.

The armored vehicles for the expanded peacekeeping mission are to be taken from United States Army stocks in Germany. Administration officials had said it would take three weeks to transport the vehicles to Uganda, a delay that would put off the deployment of African peacekeeping troops in neighboring Rwanda.

Applying the Right Label

But Administration officials said a plan had been approved today at a White House meeting to move the vehicles to an Air Force base near Frankfurt and begin flying them to Uganda on Sunday.

Even as the White House was putting the finishing touches on its plan, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee prepared a letter to President Clinton urging him to acknowledge formally that genocide is occurring in Rwanda. Hundreds of thousands of Rwandans have been killed since April 6, when the mysterious crash of the Rwandan President's plane set off a cycle of mass ethnic and political killings.

The letter, which is to be sent on Thursday, was signed by virtually all the committee members, including Senator Claiborne Pell of Rhode Island, the ranking Democrat, and Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina, the senior Republican.

The issue of the personnel carriers arose last month, when the United Nations sought 50 of them for the Ghanaian vanguard of an planned force of 5,500 peacekeepers, mostly African. Only 450 lightly armed peacekeepers are currently deployed in Rwanda, far too few even to assure the safety of people in the capital.

While the Administration has ruled out sending United States troops to

No more debates over how much the U.N. is to pay for trucks.

the training could be compressed into a few days.

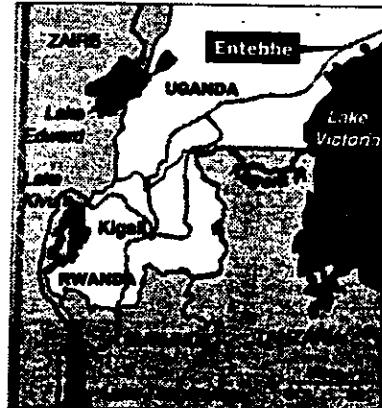
Ten armored personnel carriers are also being sent from Somalia to Rwanda to help equip the peacekeepers. The Ghanaians have 300 troops in Rwanda and 500 more who are ready to go as soon as the personnel carriers arrive.

Administration officials said today that President Clinton and Anthony Lake, the national security adviser, had been concerned about assertions that the Administration was moving too slowly and had pressed the Pentagon to step up its efforts.

The Word From Christopher

The change in the Administration's public statements on the killings in Rwanda was reflected in a comment on Friday by Secretary of State Warren Christopher that acts of genocide had occurred in Rwanda. "I think that is the operative term, from a legal standpoint," he said. "If there is any particular magic in calling it genocide, I have no hesitancy in saying that."

The Administration's previous instructions to officials to say only that there may have been acts of genocide in Rwanda had brought criticism from lawmakers and human rights groups that Washington was trying to play down the extent and nature of the killing.



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American cargo planes are to ferry armored personnel carriers to Entebbe, Uganda, for use by United Nations troops in Rwanda.

Rwanda, it is willing to help equip the force to ferry civilians to safety.

During his recent trip to Europe, Mr. Clinton said Washington would "provide the armored support necessary if the African nations will provide the troops."

But while the Pentagon was willing to provide M-113 armored personnel carriers, it was not prepared to do so alone, and insisted that the United Nations reimburse Washington for use of the vehicles, spare parts and shipment to Entebbe, Uganda, where the United Nations would take control.

In recent days the talks appeared to have hit a snag when the Pentagon raised its cost estimate by 50 percent, and insisted that the United Nations also pay to fly the vehicles back to Germany. That drove the cost to \$15 million, \$11 million of which was for transportation.

The United Nations, which is strapped for money to pay for peacekeeping operations, balked at the increased cost and proposed that the vehicles be returned by ship. Today Administration officials said the issue had been resolved, essentially in favor of the United Nations: the cost will be about \$10 million, and the vehicles will return by ship.

A Shorter Timetable

To speed the shipment, the Air Force is to use huge C-5 planes instead of the smaller C-141's it had planned to use. Each C-5 can carry 12 personnel carriers. Officials said it would take only four or five days to transport the vehicles to Uganda.

Ghanian troops are to go to Entebbe to learn to use the vehicles, and American officials said they hoped

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